

# LACDMH TRANSITION AGE YOUTH CONFERENCE

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On Wednesday, May 29, 2013, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) hosted the second Transition Age Youth (TAY) Conference, *Promoting Hope, Wellness and Self-sufficiency: One Success at a Time*, at the California Endowment in downtown Los Angeles. The all-day conference, funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), attracted about 300 attendees

LACDMH Director Marvin Southard, D.S.W., welcomed the audience to the conference and had a message specifically for TAY attendees. "What we need from you is to be heroes... I'm urging you to harness your idealism, courage and creativity to be heroes today," said Dr. Southard. He asked the teenagers and young adults to reach out and help others who are faced with addiction, and to show them the way to recovery. He also wanted them to include those who feel excluded and advised the TAY participants to get health insurance when it becomes available in October.



Following Dr. Southard's welcome address, the morning keynote speaker LaRon Armstead took the podium. Born and raised in South Los Angeles, surrounded by street gangs and drugs, Armstead shared his story of overcoming the odds and living a productive life despite his past. A graduate of Loyola Marymount University, he now gives back to his community as a volunteer and a mentor to at-risk youth.

Later in the day, Tomas Alvarez III, founder and CEO of Beats, Rhymes and Life (BRL), Inc., served as the afternoon keynote speaker. BRL is a community organization that promotes mental health and wellness among youth and young adults by using hip hop music and popular culture.

The conference's key audiences were TAY (between the ages of 16-25 years old) and the agencies and organizations that serve them. Event organizers wanted the conference to provide participants with the tools and knowledge to effectively deliver mental health services and support to the TAY population, especially those with emotional, behavioral and/or substance abuse challenges. There were several workshops in-between keynote speakers and informational booths on-site to provide help and resources.

